

CLAIMS

1 - 23. (Cancelled)

24. (Previously Presented): A method for simultaneously slicing at least two food product blocks comprising:

- feeding in parallel the at least two food product blocks to a blade;
- inserting each of the at least two food product blocks into a feed passage, wherein the at least two food product blocks are optionally brought into contact with a limit stop;
- conveying the at least two food product blocks towards the blade by at least one conveyor belt;
- slicing the ends of the food product blocks; and
- connecting a gripper to a end of the at least two food product blocks to create a connection, remote from the blade, of each of the at least two food product blocks, wherein the connection between the gripper and the at least two food product blocks occurs only after slicing of one or more of the at least two food product blocks begins; and
- wherein the gripper is not driven by its own drive at least during contact with the food product block.

25. (Cancelled):

26. (Previously Presented): A method for slicing a food product block comprising:

- feeding the food product block to a blade;
- conveying the food product block towards the blade by at least one conveyor belt, wherein at any desired time during slicing of the food product block, the rear end of the food product block is brought into contact in each case with a means,
- wherein the means is driven by the food product block, the conveyor belt, or both during said contact with the food product block; and
- wherein the means serves merely to hold and not to drive the food product block.

27. (Previously Presented): A method according to claim 24, wherein front ends of the at least two food product blocks are arranged in such a way that, before a first cut, the front ends are located in a line in a plane substantially parallel to the cutting plane of the blade, such that no trimming cut has to be performed.

28. (Cancelled):

29. (Previously Presented): A method according to claim 24, wherein the gripper is connected to the food product block reversibly and force-lockingly, interlockingly, and/or by material bonding.

30. (Cancelled):

31. (Previously Presented): A method according to claim 24, further comprising the step of removing the gripper from the feed passage after slicing, and bringing the gripper up to an end of a new product block to be cut.

32. (Previously Presented): A method according to claim 24, wherein the connection between the gripper and the food product block is broken once slicing of at least one food product block is completed.

33. (Previously Presented): A method according to claim 24, wherein the gripper is driven, at least at times, solely by the conveyor belt, one of the two or more food product blocks, or both.

34. (Previously Presented): A method according to claim 24, wherein, at least towards the end of the respective slicing process, the grippers is/are in each case engaged with at least one conveyor belt.

35. (Previously Presented): A method according to claim 24, wherein a plurality of food product blocks are sliced in parallel.

36 – 46. (Cancelled):

47. (Previously Presented): A method according to claim 29, wherein the gripper is driven, at least at times, solely by the at least one conveyor belt of the food product block, the food product block, or both.

48. (Previously Presented): A method according to claim 47, wherein at least towards the end of the respective slicing process, the grippers is/are in each case engaged with the at least one conveyor belt.

49. (Previously Presented): A method according to claim 26, wherein the means is connected to the food product block reversibly and force-lockingly, interlockingly, by material bonding, or any combination thereof.

50. (Previously Presented): A method according to claim 49, wherein the means is driven, at least at times, solely by the conveyor belt of the food product block, the food product block, or both.

51. (Previously Presented): A method according to claim 50, wherein at least towards the end of the respective slicing process, the means is/are in each case engaged with at least one conveyor belt.

52. (Previously Presented): A method according to claim 48, wherein the at least one conveyor belt includes two conveyor belts that are aligned substantially parallel to one another, and have opposite facing surfaces that come into contact with the at least two food product blocks, and

wherein the two conveyor belts have an inlet side distal from the blade.

53. (Previously Presented): A method according to claim 51, wherein the at least one conveyor belt includes two conveyor belts that are aligned substantially parallel to one another, and have opposite facing surfaces that come into contact with the at least two food product blocks, and

wherein the two conveyor belts have an inlet side distal from the blade.

54. (Previously Presented): A method according to claim 52, further including the steps of clamping the at least two food product blocks between the two conveyor belts, and moving the at least two food product blocks through the cutting plane by using the two conveyor belts.

55. (Previously Presented): A method for simultaneously slicing at least two food product blocks comprising:

- inserting the at least two food product blocks into a guide passage;

- guiding the at least two product blocks into a conveying means;

- conveying the at least two food product blocks towards the blade using at least one conveyor belt;

- slicing the food product blocks;

- attaching a gripper to an end, remote from the blade, of each of the at least two food product blocks;

- driving the grippers that are attached to each of the at least two food product blocks, at least part of the time, using only the at least one conveyor belt, one of the at least two food product blocks, or both;

- engaging the at least two food product blocks with the at least one conveyor belt;

- wherein the at least one conveyor belt includes an inlet side and an blade side;

- wherein the at least two food product blocks are in contact with the at least one conveyor belt so that the at least two food product blocks, the gripper, or both are conveyed towards the blade;

- wherein the grippers attach to the ends of the at least two food product blocks after slicing of the at least two product blocks has begun;

- wherein the gripper is not driven by its own drive at least during contact with the food product block; and

- wherein the at least two food product blocks are arranged in such a way that before the first cut, the at least two food product blocks are located in a line, substantially parallel to the cutting plane of the blade so that no trimming cut has to be performed.

56. (New): The method of claim 24, wherein the food product blocks are not compressed by the grippers.

57. (New): The method of claim 24, wherein the grippers serves merely to hold and not to drive the food product block.